



Indiana WIC

VENDOR UPDATE

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Inside this issue:

Message from the Vendor Manager 1

Rising Food Prices 1

Vendor Agreements 2

Cashing CVVs 2

Baby Food Basics 2

Infant Formula 3

Programming Scanners 3

Workplace Lactation 4

FAQ 4

Infant Cereal Change 4

Dear WIC Vendors:

This is our first edition of Indiana WIC Vendor Update. It contains a number of important reminders and information about the WIC Program. We hope you will take a few minutes to view its contents, share it with your employees, and post it in your break area.

As this edition goes out, we are in the process of mailing laminated food cards and shelf tags directly to stores. The new cards and shelf tags are accented with green. Please put one card at each register and discard last year's card with blue stripes. Thank you for your partnership with the Indiana WIC Program and helping ensure that Hoosiers have access to nutritious foods.

Sincerely, Dan Labus, Vendor Manager



Food Forecast: Rising Prices

The increased prices of food costs us all. For the Indiana WIC program, heightened costs can limit the number of participants we are able to serve. Price hikes also directly impact WIC vendors through check edits. Vendors can help control how these costs affect both WIC and check rejections.

Similar to households, state WIC agencies have budgets they must adhere to. Food costs must be routinely monitored to stay within the allotted budget. Sometimes foods must be removed from the food list. This usually happens once a year after a thorough evaluation of all available foods. However, food corrections may also be made midyear due to price increases or changes in product size.

Although WIC does not currently go up quickly, stores need to inform anticipate any mid-year changes, local agencies about these sudden spiraling costs could change this. increases. If a store abruptly raises a Vendors can help contain costs by price without notifying the local ensuring that participants are agency, they risk a check rejection.

"For 2012, food price inflation is expected to abate from 2011 levels but is above the historical average for the past two decades."

- from the U.S. Department of Agriculture

selecting correct and assorted varieties of WIC approved foods.

As food costs increase, WIC check edits must also increase to prevent check rejections. Food price increases may be gradual or spike quickly. Again, WIC constantly monitors the cost of WIC allowed foods and frequently adjusts the maximum allowed amount of each check type. When food prices

Unfortunately we cannot control commodity prices that resulted in increased cereal, dairy, peanut butter, and other WIC food prices. However, we can work to ensure that the correct foods are being selected by participants.

New Year, New Vendor Agreements

Indiana WIC is making plans to send Vendor Applications to all current vendors in April 2012. The applications will be sent electronically to chain stores with common ownership and to independent stores with an email address.

Any vendor that does not have an email address can request that a hard copy be mailed to them.

All vendors except our brand new vendors have a

Vendor Agreement that expires Sept. 30, 2012.

By accurately completing an application and submitting it to the State WIC office, you will be assured consideration for contract renewal.



Vendor Agreements expire:

Sept 30, 2012

Please email us with the following information so we can update our mailing list:

- Store name
- Address
- Vendor #
- Phone #
- Manager's name

Email: inwic@isdh.in.gov



CVV Check-Out Tips:

- ✓ Any cost over the amount on the CVV must be paid by the participant.
- ✓ Both fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables are allowed.
- ✓ Make sure the customer signs the voucher.
- ✓ The signature on the voucher must match a signature on the WIC ID folder.

Cashing CVVs

A few considerations should be kept in mind when redeeming cash value vouchers. A cash value voucher (CVV) is a WIC check with a fixed dollar amount used to purchase fruits and vegetables. Both fresh and frozen fruit and vegetable products are allowed. Redemption guidelines for CVVs are synonymous with

the rules for cashing WIC

Do not write in an amount higher than what is stated on the voucher. It will be rejected.

checks. Dollar amounts of \$6, \$10, or \$15 are printed on the CVV. The most common

reason for the rejection of checks involves writing in amounts over the allowed monetary value. If the cost goes over the allowed amount, the WIC participant may pay the amount over the allowed value, or items may be voided to stay within the allotted amount. If the cost is less than the face value, simply enter the total. Also be aware that cash back is *not* allowed.

Baby Food Basics

Beech-Nut is the brand of baby food provided to Indiana WIC participants. What can participants get? Any Stage 2 fruit or vegetable in 4-ounce jars. This includes any single fruit or vegetable, mixed fruits, mixed vegetables, or even a mixture of fruits and vegetables. Baby food meats are also allowed, which come in 2.5-ounce jars of turkey,

chicken, or beef, all with broth.

"Indiana WIC only allows Stage 2 fruits and vegetables in 4-oz. jars."

It should be noted that food items such as macaroni, oatmeal, yogurt, and meat are

not allowed to be mixed in with the fruits or vegetables. These items may be found on the store shelf right next to the WIC authorized foods.

Also, Indiana WIC only allows Stage 2 fruits and vegetables in 4-oz. jars. Stage 2 1/2, stage 3, and 6-oz. jars are *not* authorized for participants.



Finding the Right Formula

The Indiana WIC Program believes breastfeeding is best for babies. However, when breastfeeding is not an option, infant formulas are an acceptable alternative. The nutritional needs of most WIC participants using formula can be met through one of the regularly offered Gerber varieties, including Good Start Gentle, Protect, or Soy.

When babies have special nutritional considerations, these needs are met through a different process. If the special formula

required is not normally stocked in the local WIC authorized grocery store, the participant must visit a WIC authorized pharmacy to special order the formula needed.

Since the special formula may be the sole source of nutrition for the baby, pharmacies are required to produce the formula within two working days (or four days over a weekend). Typically, the pharmacy provides the participant with the formula by the next day. Listed below is a link to the formulary:

http://www.in.gov/isdh/files/Formulary_Effective_Oct-1-2011.pdf



Addressing Scanner Shortcomings

Most WIC authorized stores identify WIC foods through their scanner systems. Many of these systems have two WIC modes:

MODE 1: processes cash value vouchers (CVVs) for fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables

MODE 2: processes all other WIC foods

Regardless of whether your store has one mode or two, there are a few things you should know about using scanners to identify WIC foods.

Although valuable tools, scanners alone cannot guarantee that the right foods are being selected and sold using WIC checks. Scanners are not correct 100 percent of the time. Foods are added to the WIC program at least once every year. New products that qualify for the program are also introduced throughout the year. Sometimes stores do resets that add many

new WIC foods. Whatever the reason, cashiers need to be able to use WIC supplied food lists to determine when a food may be authorized but does not scan correctly.

The WIC food card comes in two variations. One food card is flat and used only by cashiers and stores. The other is a multiple fold card used by participants or stores. The foods listed on both types of cards are exactly the same. The foods are listed by food group and are easily identifiable.

Cashiers should learn the layout of the cards so that foods can be referenced quickly when necessary. If a food is identified as approved and does not scan, the cashier is required to override and sell the food. Not doing so violates the WIC store's vendor agreement. If a store is unsure if a food is WIC approved, they can contact their local WIC agency to verify authorized foods. In addition, stores should have a means

of adding new foods to their scanner system, which may include other store systems if part of a larger chain.

Adding foods to the store scanner is an ongoing effort. Once a food is identified as WIC approved, the store should have a plan to routinely update the scanner system. If the system is not up to date, issues (and possibly arguments) over the same food products will play out over and over.

Remember, all scanner systems are controlled by the vendor. If you do not make routine corrections, your scanners will become increasingly inaccurate. Although WIC business consultants routinely test scanners in stores, they do not have access to your systems.

No matter how accurate the scanner, it cannot replace the cashier. Ultimately, it is the cashier's responsibility to ensure that all of the foods sold on a WIC check are correct.

"No matter how accurate the scanner, it cannot replace the cashier."



Supporting Workplace Lactation

Indiana WIC is working with grocery store vendors to help implement policies that will meet the new requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for break time for nursing mothers. As employers who work closely with the WIC program and who may employ WIC participants, a worksite initiative can be a positive experience for your employees and your company as well.

Lactation support in the workplace promotes better health for the babies of breastfeeding employees. New mothers also experience significant health benefits by choosing to breastfeed regularly.

In addition, lactation programs are good for business as supportive work environments boost employee productivity while lowering turnover

and absenteeism rates.

The needs of breastfeeding employees are simple, and a lactation support program can be put into place inexpensively. Do not hesitate to consult your local WIC Program for assistance in arranging a lactation space for mothers at your business.



A Lactation Support Program may include:

- ✓ A private place for employees to express milk at work.
- ✓ A flexible schedule to express milk 2-3 times a day.
- ✓ Information on how to combine employment with breastfeeding.
- ✓ Supportive supervisors and staff.

FAQ

Q. What happens when a vendor sells their store?

A. WIC authorization is not transferable. It ends when a store is sold, so that store can no longer accept WIC checks. Vendors must give advance notice prior to selling or closing a store. The vendor ID stamp must be returned to the local WIC office. The new owner may apply for authorization and can find the application materials at: www.wic.in.gov.

Q. What should we do if a WIC ID folder and/or unused checks are left in our store?

A. WIC generally does not replace lost checks, and customers can't use checks without their ID folder. Please call the local WIC clinic to report the lost folder; the phone number will be on the ID folder. The local WIC office will contact the participant and ask them to return to your store for their lost property. Put the folder in a safe place where lost items are kept.

Q. Are cut melons allowed for purchase with a CVV (cash value voucher)?

A. Yes, fresh fruits and vegetables may be whole or cut, as long as they are not combined with any dip, dressing, croutons, etc.



Infant Cereal Change

Infant cereal checks issued to WIC participants after January 1st, 2012, will allow purchase of "any brand" as opposed to the current requirement of "Gerber brand only." Therefore, by **January 1st**, scanners need to be updated to allow any brand 8-oz. box

of infant cereal matching the criteria outlined in the WIC food card, and cashiers need to ensure participants are allowed to purchase what is stated on their check.

Participants receive three months of checks at one time, so participants who

picked up their checks in December, for example, will still be using checks allowing "Gerber brand only." Checks will gradually transition from "Gerber brand only" to "Any brand" over a three month period.